



Helping Your Child with Unclear Speech

- *Get down face to face at the child's level.*
It shows that you are interested in what they are saying and they see clearly the movements of your mouth when you are talking.
- *Respond to **what** the child has said not **how** clearly they have said it.*
- *Don't make the child repeat the words.*
Children need to feel relaxed and confident in order to experiment with sounds and so change their speech patterns. Drawing too much attention to mispronunciations and making children repeat words is not helpful.
- *Don't rely on repetition to provide clarity.*
Find another means to help the child get their point across.
 - ☐ Gesture
 - ☐ Asking them to show you/ point to it
 - ☐ Getting them/ you to draw
 - ☐ Problem solve and play detective
e.g. "Is it at home or nursery?"
"Is it another child?"
"Is it a game you have played?" etc
- *When talking to the child consider slowing your rate of speech down.*
This will act as a natural model to help the child slow their rate down and help naturally improve clarity. If you model a slow, steady pace this will support the child to do so too.
- *Try to build his confidence and self esteem.*
Give the child special time or 1:1 if possible. Spend time playing a game or activity with them. Any attempts to talk will be within the context of the game and therefore make it easier for the listener to interpret and understand what the child is saying. Repeat back what the child has said showing them that they have been understood.
- *With younger children, take the pressure and focus off the child when you don't understand.*
Help them to repeat and find other ways to tell you:
e.g. "Oh I have silly ears today- can you tell me again?"
"My goodness. I didn't hear all of that – can you show me?"
- *Don't pretend to understand.*
This can sometimes lead you to agreeing to something you have no intention of letting the child do! Use the above strategies to get him to tell you another way.



Sometimes you have to admit that you don't understand. Be as reassuring as possible or change the subject and focus on something positive if your child a confident communicator ask them to tell you more or show you.



- *Advice for younger children who are able to articulate a sound but not use it in words.*

This is quite normal. A child may articulate 's' but say "tock" for "sock". The child has to understand how to use the sound. This usually develops naturally. The best way to help is to repeat the word correctly so the child hears a good model.

You can give your child a good speech model by saying the word back the way he would if he could- emphasising the important sound e.g.

Where is your sock?
Oh, here is your sock,
you can put your sock
on now!



Your child has heard the important sound correctly produced 3 times and this will build up awareness and recognition of this sound.

- *Advice for older children- who can imitate sounds but aren't using them in their speech*

Let them hear you 'fix' the error.

If I said tat, that wouldn't be
right would it? I would need
to fix that and say cat?
Does that sound right?



You don't need to insist that your child copies but if they want to have a go- let them try!